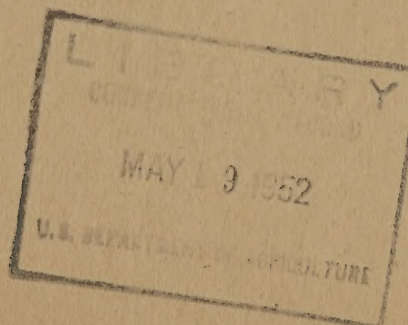


Reserve
1.913
J 2R 24

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS
RESULTING FROM THE MEETING OF
THE 1950 EXTENSION EDITOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TOGETHER WITH A REVIEW OF COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS, 1944-1949

United States Department of Agriculture
Extension Service
Washington 25, D. C.

456 (4-51)



Recommendations, Seventh Extension Editor Advisory Committee, 1950, pertaining to Federal staff activities, and actions taken.

1. INTERPRETING RESEARCH

Recommendations

(a) The expansion of research and extension staffs, increased demand from the people for authentic information, and increased opportunities for the use of radio, television and visual aids, and other media in the field of mass communication have placed a heavy load on the facilities of the information staffs.

An Administrative review of the situation at the Federal and State levels to determine whether the information facilities, equipment, and personnel have kept pace with this increased demand is desirable.

(b) There is a weak link in the research chain between the completion of the projects and their practical application by farm people. Often extension specialists and extension and station information workers are not informed on results of research. It may well be a responsibility of information workers to give research workers a better understanding of the need for prompt and interpretative reporting of research findings. This might be done on an individual basis or through seminars.

Action taken

(a) As a step toward meeting this need, Lyman Noordhoff, assistant extension editor in Illinois, spent the month of June, 1950, working in the Department of Agriculture and studying current methods of releasing USDA news through State extension editors. At the end of his study he prepared 13 recommendations which were mimeographed and sent to agency information heads and State extension editors on August 31, 1950.

The Agricultural Research Administration invited an 8-man advisory committee to meet in Washington March 5 and 6 and discuss research information. Copies of their recommendations were mailed to you March 23.

(b) Applies to State extension personnel. We have not checked to see what has been done in the States.

Recommendations

(c) A planned program of keeping Federal and State research and extension workers informed of the use of material provided by them and issued by State extension editorial offices would do much to implement the movement of research information from the laboratories to the farms and homes. This program should include routing of releases and clippings from the States to the Federal extension service for distribution to the subject-matter source.

(d) A continuation of the trend towards close working relations between State research and extension information divisions will result in a further improvement in service to the public.

Action taken

(c) A careful review is made in this Division of all releases and other information material received by the Division of Extension Information from the State offices. These are promptly routed to the subject-matter specialists interested and to program leaders.

(d) As described by the recommendation, this is a responsibility of State staffs, and, we understand, the trend is generally continuing.

2. PUBLIC RELATIONS

Recommendations

(a) The American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities Committee on Extension Organization and Policy has established a subcommittee on public relations. The wholehearted cooperation of extension information workers is pledged toward achieving the objectives which will be set up by this group.

(b) Improved services for disseminating information to city groups are necessary in view of the growing preponderance of city people among our population.

(c) Public understanding of the problems of agriculture in the United States is at a low ebb. A combination of circumstances has resulted in this basic industry being subject to an unfavorable reaction on the part of the public. Extension personnel can be of service to agriculture by:

- (1) Providing facts to counteract erroneous impressions;
- (2) Providing interpretative information about agriculture and its importance to the welfare of the community, State, and Nation.

Action taken

(a) Field agents of the Division of Field Coordination are conducting a public relations survey in all of the States, which is expected to be completed by June 30. The survey is being made at the request of the Subcommittee on public relations. National totals will be compiled by the Division of Field Studies and Training for use by the Subcommittee. Extension editors have been kept informed through the weekly letter of every stage of consideration by the committee.

(b) Through consumer education programs, helpful information on marketing problems is being provided urban consumers. Other programs are also brought to the attention of urban people through the press, radio, television, and articles in national magazines.

(c) While this problem is far from solved, the U. S. Department of Agriculture is using every opportunity to bring to the attention of the public factual information on the problems and attitudes of agriculture.

In this Division, we make every effort possible to provide facts to press, magazine, radio, and other media people upon request. When the information is not available, inquirers are directed to the proper source.

Recommendations

(d) Despite the fact that extension work has been effectively carried on throughout the United States for 36 years, there is a continuing need for better public understanding of the Extension Service--what it is and what it does. Lack of understandings of Extension Service organization and functions is no less prevalent among the faculties and students of the land-grant colleges than among the general public. Several techniques are being well used in some States for bringing about this understanding. Greater attention to this program is needed.

Action taken

(d) As described in the recommendation, this is a responsibility of State extension personnel. However, the Federal staff takes advantage of every opportunity to give outside writers and other inquirers a clear understanding of the organization and functions of cooperative extension work and its place in the agricultural education work of the United States. A report of activities with magazines in this field can be obtained upon request. Recently a fact sheet on the functions of the Cooperative Extension Service was issued.

3. 4-H CLUB WORK

Recommendation

Local volunteer 4-H club leaders are the backbone of 4-H club work and are essential to any expansion or further revitalization of the movement. Special attention at State and county levels toward developing additional informational means of recognizing the work of these leaders is indicated.

Action taken

As described by the recommendation, responsibility for its fulfillment is placed on State and county staffs. However, the Federal extension staff attempts always to give clear explanation of the function of local volunteer leaders and the service they render. Some States have given especial attention to local leader recognition.

4. RADIO AND TELEVISION

Recommendations

(a) The mistaken feeling of many extension workers that television is not yet ready to disseminate agricultural and homemaking information has been noted. If there be an interim period in any States or areas, it should be utilized for the indoctrination of extension personnel in the use of television. Television techniques are fundamentally different from those of other media now in general use. Our people must be ready to use them when opportunities are offered.

(b) Extension workers, with some 120,000 radio broadcasts during 1949, are making more contacts with farm people through this medium than any other single agency. Much room remains for improvement in the quality and production of the programs, as well as in the content of the scripts. The trend in radio seems to be toward an increasing dependence on the part of station officials and radio farm directors upon extension workers to contribute more to their farm and homemaking programs. This is a healthy situation which should not be jeopardized by mediocre programs and presentations on the part of extension workers.

Action taken

(a) There has been a decrease in the number of extension programs on technical agriculture in the past year. During the same time there has been an increase in the number of home demonstration and consumer education programs.

Twenty-four States have had some contact with television, either live or through film service. Ten States are using TV on a regular once-a-week or more basis. Eight programs in various States that had been on the air on a series or regular basis in the past, have been discontinued. Most of these discontinued shows were in agriculture. The most frequently mentioned reason for discontinuing TV shows was--lack of manpower to prepare and follow through on programs.

In the field of TV training, extension now has a compact TV school plan that has been field-tested a number of times during the year. This school system is now able to operate in much the same way as our radio schools.

(b) In the field of radio we find that States have improved considerably their mimeographed services to radio stations. New or improved subject-matter outline services are going to county agents to improve their broadcasts; simplified extension news releases have been developed for stations, tape recording libraries have been started, and direct tape service to stations has been instituted in some States. Radio schools conducted by the Washington office have moved from the more or less basis material of the past to concentrate for the time being on "Better interview methods." Eleven schools of this type have been held.

5. PUBLICATIONS

Recommendation

The present method of supplying Federal bulletins to the States on orders through the State distribution officers has proved satisfactory. In view of changing personnel in the States a statement of this policy and plan should be prepared and supplied extension directors for distribution to editors, State distribution officers, specialists, and county personnel.

With extension having personnel serving most counties in the United States, Federal bureaus should consider the advantage of using the extension distribution system when planning printing and distribution of bulletins and educational materials. Sufficient quantities should be provided the Extension Service without charge for distribution through its workers in the States and counties.

Action taken

Following the meeting of the seventh Extension Editor Advisory Committee, a letter was sent to State publication distribution officers on July 19, enclosing a tentative draft of instructions for ordering publications. They were asked for their suggestions, and offered copies of a revised version to send to all extension workers. Supplies requested by the States were mailed in October.

Through liaison with the Department's Office of Information and other information services of bureaus, the needs of extension workers for publications is constantly kept in mind. The various offices have been very helpful in supplying, where possible without cost, copies of Department publications to meet State and county extension needs.

6. IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Recommendations

Use of information methods for the employment of mass media of communication is one of the basic tools in efficient dissemination of new knowledge among large numbers of people. It is important that workers in extension and research, outside of the information field, have an understanding of the principles involved. Provision for training in information techniques for both extension and research personnel would be an important step for agriculture and homemaking.

(a) It would be helpful if the effective kind of practical training assistance which the Federal Extension Service now renders in the States in radio and publications were also extended to the visual aids and television fields.

(b) Additional training in preparation of manuscripts for publication could well be offered to prospective authors among the extension specialists and research workers at both Federal and State levels.

(c) Both extension specialists and county extension workers would benefit from training in news writing as it is offered in many States.

Action taken

Extension information courses at six land-grant colleges this summer will give extension workers and others interested an opportunity to learn how to do a more effective teaching job with the help of news stories, radio and television presentations, publications, visual aids, and other information media. Summary information on these courses was mailed to all extension editors March 27.

(a) See report under Section 4, Radio and Television.

(b) Several States have held publications training sessions at which extension specialists and other College of Agriculture staff members have learned to make improvements in their publications.

A graduate-level course in extension publications has been scheduled for the short-term extension summer session at the University of Wisconsin in June, 1951.

(c) As described in the recommendation, this is a responsibility of State information staff members.

7. OTHER MATTERS

The members of the Extension Editor Advisory Committee feel that the work of information workers would be made more effective by the adoption of the following specific measures:

Recommendations

(a) There is great interest among the farm people over the Nation in research under way at Beltsville and field stations and laboratories of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. It is urged that the Agricultural Research Administration record these projects through the inexpensive medium of 2x2-inch colored slides; that a copy of each slide set, together with the descriptive script, be deposited with State Extension Service film libraries for the use of specialists and county agents; and that facilities be set up for purchase of additional sets by the States. This will provide an effective and economical method of telling the story of research where it needs to be told.

(b) Copies of releases on research findings issued by the USDA Office of Information should be tagged or given an identifying heading to distinguish them from other material.

(c) A regular digest of USDA research findings, if routed to State research and extension information workers, would be helpful in keeping them up to date.

(d) Many State information project agreements no longer fit present problems and programs. A model information project agreement, if prepared by the Federal Extension Service and distributed to the States, would be a starting point to put the agreements on a more realistic basis.

Action taken

(a) This has been discussed on several occasions by ARA and Extension staff members but no plans have been formulated for carrying out this recommendation.

(b) No practical method has been found yet to accomplish this. ARA releases continue to go out marked "Agricultural Research Administration" immediately under the heading--UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

(c) This is also recommended by the March 5-6 ARA advisory committee. Plans are under way looking toward providing a service of this character.

(d) A suggested draft for an information project was drawn up and sent to the States. This has resulted in many States revising their projects and bringing them in line with current needs.

Recommendations

(e) The present outlines for preparation of information project annual reports and plans of work are designed for subject-matter specialists. Preparation of outlines specifically for the information field would be helpful.

Action taken

(e) Work was begun on this recommendation earlier this year.